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The Unity of Virtue

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THE UNITY OF VIRTUE

THE THESIS of this paper is highly unusual, yet it is perfectly straightforward. It is that when Socrates said “Virtue is one,” he meant it quite literally! True, the conventional philosophical wisdom—which has infected classicist interpreters of Socrates as well as philosophical interpreters—renders a literal reading of the doctrine quite impossible. But the conventional philosophical wisdom is both mistaken as philosophy and anachronistic as exegesis of Socrates.¹ So there is every reason to look around for an alternative interpretation of Socrates—and what more natural than that he meant what he said? My task, then, is both philosophical and exegetical. I concentrate on the philosophical half of the task in Sections I and II of the paper, setting forth the philosophical assumptions which have traditionally been made and showing that it is unnecessary to make them, and sketching in by contrast the alternative interpretation I am proposing. In Section III, I show how, on the literal interpretation, Socrates’ arguments in the *Protagoras* purporting to show that “Virtue is one” are much improved over what they have usually been supposed to be. In Section IV, the literal interpretation is extended to the *Laches* and the *Charmides*, and the single entity in question, virtue, identified with the knowledge (science) of good and evil. The further characterization of this single entity, and of its place in a Socratic theory of action and motivation, is promised for a later paper.

I

The so-called doctrine of “the unity of the virtues,” which turns up in some, though not all, of Plato’s earlier, “Socratic” dialogues, is almost always taken to be a disguised equivalence and not an identity. That is, it is taken simply as

¹ See nn. 42 and 43 below.

(1) Men are brave if and only if they are wise
if and only if they are temperate
if and only if they are just
if and only if they are pious,

and not as the stronger

(2) Bravery = wisdom = temperance = justice = piety.

(2) is stronger than (1) because it entails but is not entailed by (1). It is not entailed by (1) since it carries ontological implications not carried by (1)—for example,

(3) “Bravery,” “wisdom,” “temperance,” “justice,” and “piety” are five different names of the same thing

and

(4) In addition to brave men there is such a thing as bravery.

(3) is the natural metalinguistic version of (2), given the usual assumptions about identity and reference. And (4) is entailed by (2)—though not (1)—when taken together with

(4a) There are brave men

(4b) If there are brave men and if there is such a thing as bravery, then bravery is not identical with any brave men.

Now there are very strong textual reasons for preferring (2) to (1) as an interpretation of Socrates. To give just one example, there can be little doubt that, using *οὐσία* or *πρᾶγμα* for “thing,” Socrates accepts (3) in the *Protagoras*.² Why, then, is it practically

² *Πρᾶγμα*: 330C1, 4, D4, 331A8, 332A5, 349B3, 4-5, C1 and also 330D5 with D8-E1 and 360E8. *οὐσία*: 349B4. At least 330C4, D4, 5, 331A8 are explicitly in Socrates’ terms (and not in terms we could expect only Protagoras to accept), and this justifies us in finding the 349 uses also as Socractic. That is to say, the indications are that to consider whether virtue is *ἐν τῷ*, some single thing, is to consider whether it is *ἐν πρᾶγμα*, *μία οὐσία*—one thing, one being (also translated as “essence,” “substance”). By the end of the paper it will be clear that I understand the Socratic uses of such words as *οὐσία*, *εἶδος*, *μετέχειν*, etc. as more akin to Hippocratic uses of *εἶδος*, *φύσις* and *μετέχειν* than to, say, middle Platonic uses.

impossible to find an interpreter who attributes the doctrine of "the unity of the virtues" to Socrates in this stronger form?³

At first blush, it might seem that interpreters fear the ontological implications of (2) which we have just noticed. We might picture them asking: how could Socrates seriously have subscribed to (3) and (4)? After all, was it not *Plato* who waxed metaphysical, "separating" the Socratic universal? Unfortunately, there is some serious confusion in these questions. For no interpreter can avoid the ontological implications of the so-called "What is *X*?" questions:⁴ questions of the form

³ The equivalence view can be found at its finest in G. Vlastos (ed.), *Plato's Protagoras* (Indianapolis, 1956), p. liv, n. 10; p. xxxv. Other examples are E. R. Dodds (ed.), *Plato's Gorgias* (Oxford, 1959), *apud* 507A4-C7; R. E. Allen, *Plato's Euthyphro and the Earlier Theory of Forms* (New York, 1970), pp. 84 with 94; G. Santas in *Philosophical Review*, LXXIII (1964), 157; Michael J. O'Brien, *The Socratic Paradoxes and the Greek Mind* (Chapel Hill, 1967), p. 129, n. 16; and (perhaps?) N. Gulley, *The Philosophy of Socrates* (London, 1968), pp. 153-163. The stronger identity view seems, however, to have been held (at least some of the time) by a number of earlier scholars—e.g., J. Burnet, *Greek Philosophy, Part I, Thales to Plato* (London, 1914), sec. 134; A. E. Taylor, *Socrates* (Anchor Books Ed.; New York, 1954), pp. 144-145; *Plato, the Man and his Work* (Meridian [6th] ed.; New York, 1956), p. 247; and (closest to a literal view, though he thinks most of Socrates' arguments fallacious) J. Adam (ed.), *Platonis Protagoras* (Cambridge, 1893). The identity view was held in antiquity by Antisthenes, the Megarics, and Menedemus the Eretrian—all Socratics. (See E. Zeller, *Socrates and the Socratic Schools*, trans. by Oswald J. Reichel [London, 1877] for references to the minor Socratics.) It is probably Socrates (as Burnet, but not Zeller, thinks) to whom Isocrates attributes the identity view in *Helen*, I.i. Aristotle, however, thought that for Socrates the virtues were sciences (E.N. 1144B17 ff., E.E. 1216B2 ff.).

Many scholars—e.g., Shorey in *The Unity of Plato's Thought* (Chicago, 1903), ch. 1, and the great Zeller—have simply fudged the issue. Such phrases as "reduced all the virtues to knowledge," "all the virtues consist in knowledge of some kind" (Zeller, p. 143), "Virtue has a unity in knowledge" (Adam, p. 128), "From that point of view they all become merged into one" (Burnet, sec. 134), "Each [virtue] involves the other" (Shorey, ch. 1), "To this extent the definition of a particular virtue is at the same time the definition of any particular virtue" (Gulley, p. 153), are favorites of the fudgers. Others seem simply confused (e.g., Taylor, *ibid.*, who takes the quite preposterous view that what the doctrine meant was that the virtue words were all synonymous). Once the equivalence view is clearly stated, however, as in Vlastos, there can be little excuse for failing to face the issue squarely.

⁴ See Richard Robinson, *Plato's Earlier Dialectic*, 2nd ed. (Oxford, 1953), ch. 5.

- (5) What is that one thing, the same in all cases, by virtue of which brave men are brave?⁵

But consideration of the “What is *X*?” question is no blind alley. Here we will find the underlying reason for the rejection of (2). For the “What is *X*?” question is generally taken (especially by those who accept [1]) to be a request for meanings. “What is bravery?” on this view seeks the meaning of “bravery.” In the light of (5), it is easy to see that such interpreters are committed to something like

- (6) In addition to brave men, there must be such a thing as bravery—that is the meaning of “bravery”—by virtue of which brave men are brave.

From this we see immediately why these interpreters prefer (1) to (2). For since nothing could be more obvious than that

(7) The meaning of “bravery” ≠ the meaning of “wisdom,” it follows—if “bravery” has the same reference in (7), (6), and (2)—that (2) is false. Accordingly, it has been concluded that what Socrates means by the doctrine of “the unity of the virtues” must be not the identity (2), but the equivalence (1).

An exactly parallel argument results if for “the meaning of ‘bravery’” in (6)-(7) we substitute “the essence of bravery” or “the universal bravery”—at least on the most usual accounts of essences and universals. For on these accounts,

- (8) The essence of bravery = the essence of wisdom if and only if “bravery” and “wisdom” are synonymous—that is, if the meaning of “bravery” = the meaning of “wisdom.”

⁵ “The same in all cases”: *Euthyphro* 5D1, *Meno* 72C2, *Laches* 191E10-11, etc. “By virtue of which”: the dative of the relative pronoun, *Euthyphro* 6D11, *Meno* 72E4-6, *Protagoras* 332B4-7 (discussed below). “That because of which” (*διό*) is used with the preceding locution at *Meno* 72C8 (two uses of this locution in the *Protagoras* are also discussed below). Interpreters have assumed that these locutions were to be used to much the same purpose—namely, that indicated in (5) throughout the early dialogues.

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And similarly for universals.⁶ Hence even those who prefer talk of essences or universals to talk of meanings characteristically endorse the equivalence (1) rather than the identity (2) as an account of “the unity of the virtues.” For brevity’s sake, I will follow the hint of (8) and speak of the proponents of meanings *or* essences *or* universals (on the usual interpretations) as all holding “the meaning view.”

In this paper, my aim will be to show that in the doctrine of “the unity of virtues,” Socrates intended the stronger (2). That is, as long as he held (1), he also held (2), and (2) was his preferred formulation of the doctrine. For similar reasons, I will also maintain that as long as he held the “Virtue is knowledge” doctrine, he held not just the equivalence

(9) Men are virtuous if and only if they have knowledge,
but also the stronger identity

(10) Virtue = knowledge,

the latter being his preferred formulation of the doctrine. On this view, the bravery which, by (4), exists in addition to brave men is identical with the temperance which exists in addition to temperate men, and so forth. But how can this be?

The answer to this question requires a completely new approach to the “What is *X*?” questions of the early dialogues. My singling out of assumption (6) of the meaning view will already have suggested this. To defend this approach in detail would take me too far afield for present purposes. So I will simply claim as evidence of its correctness (for the dialogues I consider) the way it works in passages relevant to this paper. What I maintain is this. When Socrates asked “What is bravery?” and so forth, he did not want to know what the meaning of the word “bravery” was, nor what the essence of bravery was, nor what the universal *bravery* was.

⁶ This account of the identity conditions of universals is clearly formalized in Rudolph Carnap’s great work, *Meaning and Necessity* (2nd ed.; Chicago, 1955). R.E. Allen’s Socratic “essences” (*op. cit.*, pp. 109, 110, 112, 113-114) are entities with the same identity conditions as those of meanings.

A clear alternative to this account of properties, similar to the conception of properties employed in this paper, is to be found in Hilary Putnam, “On Properties,” in N. Rescher *et al.* (eds.), *Essays in Honour of Carl G. Hempel* (Dordrecht, 1969), pp. 235-254. It will be evident that I have been greatly influenced by the writings of both Putnam and Hempel.

His question was not (what has become) the philosopher's question, the question patiently explained to students reading Plato in introductory philosophy courses; it was not a request for a conceptual analysis (as usually conceived: the generating of a certain set of analytic truths about bravery).⁷ His question was rather the *general's* question, "What is bravery?"—that is, "What is it that makes brave men brave?" The general asks this question not out of interest in mapping our concepts, but out of a desire to learn something substantial about the human psyche. He wants to know what psychological state it is, the imparting of which to his men will make them brave.⁸ But then the general does not

⁷ Again the clearest proponent of this meaning view is Vlastos. Because his introduction to the *Protagoras* does not discuss the "What is *X*?" question, his commitment to the meaning view is evidenced there only in the sharp deductive-empirical distinction maintained there (see n. 27 below). But his commitment to the meaning view of the "What is *X*?" question emerges clearly enough in "Anamnesis in the *Meno*," *Dialogue* (1965), pp. 155-159: the question is about concepts or meanings, and can get in reply only analytic truths. See also "Justice and Psychic Harmony in the *Republic*," *Journal of Philosophy* (1969), p. 507; and in its earlier version, *Journal of Philosophy* (1968), pp. 669, 670, notice the equivalence signs. (It is true that the latter two articles do not in themselves commit Vlastos to the meaning view for the earlier dialogues.) See also W. K. C. Guthrie, in *The Greek Philosophers* (New York, 1950), pp. 76-78.

Further documentation of the meaning view is scarcely necessary. It is pretty well universal. Greekless readers of the Jowett translation should be warned, however, wherever they see the word "meaning," to check a more modern translation.

⁸ It is clear that the general tone of the *Protagoras* and *Laches* directs us to the general's question. In the *Laches*, the whole problem is: how to train the sons of Melesias and Lysimachus. It is on this question—which is surely a general's question—which first Laches and Nicias, and then Socrates, are invited to pronounce. It is a defect of the meaning view that it has to make Socrates shift the question to the philosopher's question. Notice also the intermediate question by which, at 189D-E, we get from "How should we educate our sons?" (cp. 179B-D, 185E) to "What is bravery?" (cp. 190BC).

What is that which, when added (*παραγίνεσθαι*) to a man makes (*ποιεῖν*) him more brave or virtuous (as the power of sight, added to eyes, makes them see).

παραγίνεσθαι here plainly has little to do with *παρονοία* and *μεθέξις* as usually understood in the middle dialogues (a relation between certain metaphysical entities, or even abstract entities like meanings, and sensible particulars). It has to do in general with enabling (cp. the power of sight), and in particular with teaching, inculcation, what one does to improve someone. Moreover, the example Socrates gives to illustrate how bravery is "the same in all these brave men"

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know in advance whether or not the psychological state in question will also make his men act wisely. If it does, then Socrates (on the view I am presenting) will have been right. Bravery, the psychological state which makes men brave, will be identical with wisdom, the psychological state which makes men wise. Such, I will maintain, was the question "What is bravery?" for Socrates.

The following comparison may help the reader to see how I understand Socrates' treatment of such questions as "What is bravery?", "What is virtue?" Do not imagine the Ryle of the late 1940's asking "Well, what is a feeling, really?" Instead, imagine the Freud of the early 1890's asking "Well, what is hysteria, really?" Here we have, I take it, something like a contrast between conceptual questions about psychology and substantial questions about psychology, to be answered not by logical analysis, but by finding a true psychological theory. Interpreters have treated Socrates' questions as conceptual questions, whereas I am suggesting that they are substantial questions. (The question "What is water?" would be a conceptual question if what it asks is what people mean by "water"; it is a substantial question if what it asks is what a true scientific theory says water is. Thus the correct answer to the conceptual question could not have been " H_2O " prior to Dalton; but if a true chemical theory says that water is H_2O , then " H_2O " was the correct answer to the substantial question before Dalton—even though no one knew it was.)

The issue, then, is this. The meaning view takes the reference of "bravery" in "What is bravery?" to be the meaning of "bravery" or the universal *bravery*, and so forth—what we might call an *abstract entity*. And since, as was explained above, the identity conditions of meanings or universals and so forth are very narrow, "Virtue is one" must be turned into an equivalence. By contrast, I take the reference of "bravery" in "What is bravery?" to be simply that *psychological state which explains the fact that certain men do brave acts*—what we might call a *theoretical entity*.⁹ And since the

—namely, quickness—is explicitly said to be a *δύναμις*, a power (192 AB). This is surely no accident (cf. n. 38 below on the *Charmides*). Similarly, in the *Protagoras*, the teachability of virtue is a practical concern (309A-319A, 361D4).

⁹ Notice that this theoretical entity is no more (and no less) metaphysical or "separated" than, say, the hot, the cold, the wet, and the dry in which

identity conditions for psychological states are presumably wider than synonymy, we can suppose that two non-synonymous virtue-words refer to the same psychological state. Thus on my view “Virtue is one” can be taken as an identity.

I must now explain my choice of the *Protagoras*, *Laches*, and *Charmides* for detailed discussion. First, we must be clear about the scope of my thesis. Where Socrates denies any of the following,

In order to be virtuous a man must have knowledge (that is, be knowledgeable)

All just men are pious

All brave men are wise,

there is clearly no argument against my identity version of “Virtue is knowledge” or of “Virtue is one”; for these denials are equally denials of the equivalence versions. In fact, on any view, it must be admitted that Socrates sometimes denies “Virtue is knowledge” and “Virtue is one.” For the equivalence (9) is denied at *Meno* 96E ff., and the equivalence (1) is denied at *Euthyphro* 11E4-12E7,¹⁰ and again (I would say) at *Euthydemus* 281B4 ff.¹¹ So there can be no requirement that I answer for an absence of the identities (2) and (10) in these three dialogues. Our question can only be: where, as in the *Protagoras*, Socrates plainly does intend to be asserting “Virtue is knowledge” or “Virtue is one,” is he merely asserting the weaker equivalences (1) and (9), or is he asserting the stronger identities (2) and (10)? It is clear that the *Laches* and

humans “partake” in Hippocratic accounts of health and illness (see, e.g., *On Anc. Med.*, c. 14). This is, I think, a further advantage of my view over the meaning view.

¹⁰ This is clear from the examples there: fear is “broader” than awe, wherever we have the odd we have number but not vice versa. Allen (p. 84) recognizes this conflict with the *Protagoras* doctrine even read as an equivalence. Those who agree with my arguments later in the paper may suggest that Socrates here intends to be denying that piety is a proper part of justice. But the text gives absolutely no indication that Socrates thought anything wrong with this premise.

¹¹ Here there is just one thing good in itself, wisdom (= knowledge), and one bad thing, ignorance. All other things normally called “goods”—wealth, strength, honor, bravery, temperance—cause more harm than good without wisdom (cp. *Meno* 87E5-88D1, esp. 88B6). The clear implication is that bravery and temperance are as detachable from wisdom as wealth is. It is hard to see how Allen can cite this as an instance of “mutual implication” of the virtues (p. 99, n. 2).

Charmides are relevant here, whereas nothing very decisive either way turns up in such other indisputably early dialogues as the *Lysis*, *Ion*, *Apology*, *Crito*, and *Hippias Minor*. The *Gorgias*, which is a transitional dialogue to the middle period dialogues,¹² would evidently respond to investigation of our question. But for reasons of space, I will say no more about it than I do in the next paragraph.

I must now say a word about those dialogues where the denials of “Virtue is knowledge” or “Virtue is one” occur (on *either* the identity view *or* the equivalence view). Here is a possible explanation. In the *Euthyphro*, *Euthydemus*, and *Meno*, Socrates—or perhaps we should say “Socrates-Plato,” since the *Meno* is a dialogue clearly transitional from Socrates to Plato—begins to attend to the popular or “demotic” virtues, those virtues which do not require knowledge or wisdom (cf. *Phaedo* 68C-69D, 82AB; *Republic* 430C, 500D; and also the startling *Statesman* 305E-310A, where temperance and bravery are treated as *inimical* and *opposite* to each other!). If my conjecture is correct, that the *Euthyphro*, *Euthydemus*, and *Meno* do represent this transition to the consideration of the demotic virtues, then it is possible that “Socrates-Plato” still thought that *real* virtue (Plato’s “philosophic virtue”: cf. *Rep.* 505A) was one. Such an interpretation certainly sits well with the way in which Socrates treats *wisdom* at *Euthydemus* 279D ff., *justice* at *Hip. Min.* 375D-376C, *Rep.* I. 353E, and *temperance* in the *Char-mides* (at least as treated in Sec. IV below) and in the *Gorgias* (506D5-507C3). In the *Gorgias* temperance is clearly a psychological state—a *τάξις* or *κόσμος* of the soul which is evidently the causal explanation of men’s acting piously, justly, bravely, wisely, and so forth. Each of the passages cited treats the virtue in question as though it were the paramount virtue or even the only virtue. It is natural to suggest that here Socrates speaks of “real temperance,” “real wisdom,” or “real justice”—and that in so doing he speaks of just one thing—the science of good and evil, the ruling art.

Evidently, the unity of “real virtue” could be pursued into the middle and later dialogues of Plato. I shall here, however—for the

¹² E.g., Dodds, pp. 18-30; W. D. Ross, *Plato’s Theory of Ideas* (Oxford, 1951), ch. 1.

sake of space and relative completeness of argumentation—confine myself to arguing my thesis for the earlier, “Socratic,” period, before demotic virtue arises, and apropos solely of the *Protagoras*, *Laches*, and *Charmides*. It will, I hope, be clear enough along what general lines I would adapt and argue my thesis for other dialogues.

II

I must now attempt to disarm a fundamental philosophical objection to my interpretation. This is that if we just think in a common-sense way about the reference of “bravery,” “wisdom,” and so forth, we will see that the references must be dispositions—on the one hand the disposition to brave behavior, on the other the disposition to wise behavior. So bravery and wisdom, being dispositions to different kinds of behavior, must be different dispositions. Thus even leaving aside considerations of whether or not the “What is *X*?” question is a request for meanings, it can be seen that Socrates could not have thought that “bravery” and “wisdom” refer to the same thing. Surely, then, “Virtue is one” must be interpreted as the equivalence (1) rather than the identity (2)?

The objection presupposes (*a*) that dispositions are numerically distinct if and only if they lead to different kinds of behavior, and (*b*) that brave behavior and wise behavior are different kinds of behavior. Now without questioning assumption (*b*), it seems to me that the objection can be met *either* by accepting (*a*) and denying that bravery and wisdom are dispositions, *or* by denying (*a*). To make this clear I shall present two possible conceptions of bravery and wisdom, on one of which they will be dispositions of the type envisaged by the objection, and on the other of which they will not be such dispositions. I shall not inquire which conception properly deserves the name “disposition.” (I am not, of course, saying that these are the only possible conceptions of bravery and wisdom.)

On the first conception, bravery and wisdom may be called “tendencies.” And we will lay it down that tendencies are numerically distinct if and only if they lead to different kinds of behavior. On the second view, bravery and wisdom may be called “motive-

forces" or "states of soul." And we will lay it down that the *same* motive-force or state of soul can result in different kinds of behavior. Given these two views about bravery and wisdom—call them the tendency view and the motive-force or state of soul view—we can perhaps agree on the following as a possible account of Socrates' doctrine of "the unity of the virtues."

Socrates thought that all and only those men with tendencies to brave actions had tendencies to wise actions (these actions being in general different from the former actions). But he may have believed that all of these tendencies sprang from the same motive-force or state of soul (e.g. a certain kind of knowledge).¹³

The difference, then, between the two views is simply over whether to use the words "bravery" and "wisdom" for the tendencies on the one hand or for the motive-force or state of soul on the other.

Thus the fundamental philosophical objection to my interpretation of Socrates' doctrine comes to this—that "bravery" and "wisdom" *must* be words for tendencies and *cannot* be words for motive-forces or states of soul. Looked at in this way, the objection seems little better than a piece of linguistic dogmatism. What precludes the possibility of the general we met with in Section I asking "What is bravery?" and meaning thereby "What is it that these men have, that makes them so *brave* in combat? And how can I impart it or inculcate it in other men?" Would Freud have been precluded from asking "What is hysteria?" when he sought thereby an *explanation* of hysterical behavior? What the general and Freud seek is neither label nor meaning but *explanation*. They are asking, surely, about inner motive-forces or states of soul. So what we have here is surely the possibility of "bravery" and "hysteria" sometimes referring to motive-forces or states of souls. Moreover, it is conceivable that the motive-force or state of soul about which the general asked also led to other tendencies (for example, tenderness to friends). Then we would have an analogue to the identity of bravery and wisdom in the identity of the motive-force or state of soul bravery with the motive-force or state of soul tenderness to friends.

¹³ See, e.g., G. C. Field, *The Philosophy of Plato* (London, 1949), pp. 17-19; W. T. Stace, *A Critical History of Greek Philosophy* (London, 1920), p. 149.

Nor can it be maintained that Socrates would have found odd the idea of bravery as more than a tendency. After all, his pupil Plato identified bravery as a certain psychic structure. Why couldn't Socrates have found possible the identifying of bravery with a psychic state?

Some further philosophical remarks may be in order about tendencies as characterized here. First, the tendency view will often simply collapse into the meaning view. This happens if kinds of behavior are regarded as distinct if and only if the words for the kinds of behavior are nonsynonymous. This account of dispositions and kinds of behavior has been common in analytical philosophy, if rarely explicit. On this account, tendencies could be incorporated into (8) along with universals and essences. But then the tendency view would not have to be independently refuted. Second, it may be remarked that it has been common for contemporary philosophers of science, at least since 1932,¹⁴ to identify such physical dispositions as solubility with certain physical structures. If solubility is a tendency, then, of course, it cannot be a physical structure. But if solubility is that which substances have that leads to their actually dissolving in certain circumstances, then it can be such a structure.¹⁵ By contrast, it has been common in that tradition of analytical philosophy which has contributed most to the study of Plato and Aristotle—ordinary language philosophy—to identify dispositions with what I have called tendencies. According to Ryle, and on the tendency view, it can be no part of the truth conditions of a statement about solubility that there be some physical explanation of the tendency to dissolve—for example, in terms of physical structures of some kind. That would be an empirical matter, not a matter of “what we mean by” our disposition talk. For many philosophers of science, however, *whatever “we mean by” our disposition talk*, the truth conditions of disposition statements will at least often implicate

¹⁴ See, e.g., Rudolph Carnap, “Psychology in Physical Language,” in A. J. Ayer (ed.), *Logical Positivism* (Glencoe, 1959), pp. 172 ff. Similar views appear in later Carnap and Hempel without the verificationism of this article.

¹⁵ Bruce Aune, *Knowledge, Mind and Nature* (New York, 1967), pp. 109 ff., and note his application of this point to the relation between pain and pain-behavior.

itly include a clause to the effect that “there exists a physical (or scientific) explanation of the behavior in question”—whether or not that explanation can, at this stage of science, be given a more explicit characterization. Such philosophers evidently regard the assumption that lawlike behavior has an explanation as essential to any semantics they adopt for a language; for the sake of this consideration, they are prepared to drop considerations of “what we mean by” our disposition statements. This position seems to me an eminently reasonable one, though I will not directly argue its merits here.¹⁶ All I need for my present purposes is (*a*) that this *is* a reasonable position; and so (*b*) it is appropriate to consider whether Socrates held such a position. In accordance with this position, I will sometimes refer to motive-forces or states of soul as “explanatory entities.” Third, it seems to me uneconomical to suppose, as the objection must, that, in addition to brave behavior and the motive-force or state of soul which explains that behavior, there is such a thing as the tendency to brave behavior. For the proponent of the tendency view cannot do without reference to behavior or to the relevant explanatory states—unless he wishes to deprive himself of the possibility of finding explanations for the lawlike behavior that is involved. But once one *does* have reference to the behavior and to the explanatory states, what sentences referring to tendencies cannot be adequately paraphrased into sentences referring to the behavior and to the explanatory states? But as we can see from (4), the tendency view will be committed to this unjustified ontological extravagance.

Of course, we will expect there to be predicate words dividing behavior into kinds. Normally we will want to distinguish admirable actions both by the kinds of human qualities which the agents exhibit (motive-forces or states of soul) and by the kinds of situations in which they occur. Simply by way of example, let us speak of that one thing which, on Socrates’ view, is named by all of “bravery,” “wisdom,” and so forth as “practical wisdom.” Then a brave action might be an action such as a man of practical

¹⁶ They are easily discernible in Nelson Goodman, *Fact, Fiction and Forecast* (Cambridge, Mass., 1955), chs. 1 and 2.

wisdom would do in a situation of danger, a temperate action an action such as a man of practical wisdom would do in a situation of temptation, and so forth. Perhaps the following fable about the development of our ideas of actions, men, and virtues will make things clearer. Imagine that we begin (*i*) by classifying acts simply as “good acts in situations of danger,” (*ii*) abbreviate this to “brave acts,” then (*iii*) classify certain men as “brave men” according to their tendencies, and (*iv*) call that thing in them which makes them brave “bravery,” and (*v*) try to find out more about it. We may even then (*vi*) come to redraw the boundaries of brave acts in the light of theories we have about bravery. Notice that although we referred to *tendencies* in (*iii*), the reference could be eliminated by substituting for “according to their tendencies” something like “if they have the requisite quality for doing brave acts in the appropriate circumstances”; and the requisite quality could be identified with the motive-force or state of soul bravery.¹⁷

¹⁷ I would expect this account—in so far as it proves applicable to *Rep.* 441-444—to yield a rather different reading from that in David Sachs’s classic article, “A Fallacy in Plato’s *Republic*,” *Philosophical Review*, LXXII (1963), 141-158 (reprinted in G. Vlastos [ed.], *Plato* [New York, 1970], vol. II), and in Vlastos’ reply, “Justice and Psychic Harmony in Plato’s *Republic*,” *Journal of Philosophy* (1969), pp. 505-521. But I cannot here raise the question of its applicability to the *Republic*.

It will not have escaped notice that I am assuming, for the dialogues I consider, that the names “bravery,” “temperance,” “virtue,” etc. are used by Socrates for properties of *men* rather than for properties of *actions*. We should expect this from the Greek use of *ἀρετή* (“virtue”) for men only and not actions, from virtue being knowledge, a property of men. We should also expect this where the intent of the dialogue is protreptic (how are men to be made brave, wise, etc.? or for testing someone’s mettle (e.g., Charmides). This assumption is false of the *Euthyphro*, however (see esp. 5C9-D2, 6D3 with 6D10-E6). Socrates probably had no clear *theoretical* position on the relations between these two kinds of properties (cp. *Euthyphro* 7A6-8). Yet even with the *Euthyphro*, where Socrates does allow Euthyphro to come closest to what he, Socrates, thinks about piety (14B8-C3 with 13B4-11), it is again a kind of knowledge, and so a quality of men (*ὑπηρετική τις* [sc. *τέχνη*]). The *Charmides* is instructive in just this way. Charmides’ first account of temperance and also his third account (= Critias’ first account) are of temperance as a quality of actions. But Socrates brings each of them quickly around to qualities of men (159B7-8, leading to 160D5-E5, and 164A2, leading to 165B4). Similarly, in *Rep.* I, where Polemarchus and Thrasymachus both begin speaking of the justice which actions have, Socrates quickly gets them on to justice as a *τέχνη* (332C5 ff., 340C6 ff.).

On this point, as on the preference of what I call “motive-forces or states of

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In the light of these remarks, I will ignore the tendency view in the sequel, and concentrate simply upon the meaning view as the (philosophical) rationale for reading Socrates' words as though he intended the equivalences (1) and (9), and pit against it the motive-force or state of soul view as the philosophical rationale for reading Socrates' works as though he intended the identities (2) and (10).

III

In this section I begin by analyzing the different ways in which Socrates and Protagoras claim in the *Protagoras* that "Virtue is one." This analysis will show us that Socrates meant by this dictum my identity (2), that wisdom = temperance = bravery = and so forth. I then go through all the relevant skirmishes between Socrates and Protagoras over the ways in which virtue is one. The first argument on this topic, the argument from resemblance, will prove to be relevant only to the least plausible part of Protagoras' interpretation of "Virtue is one," and will do nothing toward establishing Socrates' interpretation of the dictum. The first two arguments relevant to how Socrates takes the dictum, the argument from opposites and the argument from confidence, will be shown to be much more plausible on the motive-force or state of soul view than on the meaning view. The conclusion of the *akrasia* argument, which I call the argument from "that by virtue of which," is the third relevant argument, and it confirms my view on both the "unity of the virtues" and the "What is X?" question. The same applies to the final argument of the dialogue, the argument from "Virtue is knowledge."

With the exception of the discussion of the teachability of virtue (at 318A1-328C2), the main philosophical parts of the *Protagoras* (329B5-334C5, 349A6-361D6) are given over to a dispute between Socrates and Protagoras as to the way in which virtue is one (329C6-D1). Protagoras' position, as it is progressively articulated by Socrates, is as follows:

soul," to what I call "tendencies," I find an ally in Myles F. Burnyeat, "Virtues in Action," in G. Vlastos (ed.), *Socrates* (New York, 1971), which unfortunately came into my hands only after I had completed this paper.

- (P₁) Wisdom, temperance, justice, piety, bravery are parts of virtue—parts in the way mouth, nose, eyes, ears are parts of the face, and not parts in the way the parts of gold are parts (being no different from each other or from the whole, except in largeness or smallness).
- (P₂) Wisdom ≠ temperance ≠ justice ≠ piety ≠ bravery.
- (P₃) The parts of virtue, like the parts of the face, each have their own peculiar power (*iδιαν δύναμιν*); both the parts themselves and their powers are unlike each other.
- (P₄) As one might expect from (P₁) and (P₃), men can partake in some of these parts of virtue without partaking in all of them—indeed, some men are brave but unjust, some just but not wise, and so forth.¹⁸

Socrates' position is generally agreed¹⁹ to be expressed by the words (329C8-D1) translated as

- (S₁) "Justice," "temperance," "piety" [and so forth] are names of one and the same thing,

which is evidently simply a metalinguistic version of

- (S₂) Justice, temperance, piety [and so forth] are the same thing, are one.²⁰

As I remarked at the beginning of the paper, (S₁) and (S₂) would naturally be supposed to be simply formulations of the identity statement (2). I hold that, in the *Protagoras*, wherever Socrates is arguing for his (S₁)-(S₂), he intends it in this natural and

¹⁸ For (P₁), see 329C7-8, D4-E1. For (P₂) and (P₃), see 330A3-B6; and for the distinctness of (P₂) and (P₃) see 332A2-5, 349B3-6 and the bridge (332A2-4) between the attack on (P₃) at 330B6-332A1 and the attack on (P₂) at 332A4-333B5. Notice also the contrast between 330A3 (*ἄλλο . . . ἄλλο*) and 330A6-B6 (*οὐτοί*). For (P₄), see 329E2-6. I associate (P₄) with (P₁) and (P₃) since (P₂) would be compatible with the "parts of gold" model while (P₁) is not and (P₄) probably is not.

¹⁹ See the contrast at 329C5-D1, 349B1-6, and cf. Adam, p. xx with 192, 190, 172, 171, 135, 128; Vlastos, *Plato's Protagoras*, p. liv, n. 10; Allen, pp. 84, 94.

²⁰ At 350D5, Protagoras takes Socrates to be arguing that "bravery and wisdom are the same thing (*ταῦτά ὁν*)."

obvious way, as an identity statement. The emphasized qualification means that the first skirmish between Socrates and Protagoras (at 330B6-332A1) is irrelevant, since it is concerned only with the refutation of Protagoras' (*P*₃), and this is insufficient to establish Socrates' (*S*₁)-(*S*₂)—as *Socrates well knew*.²¹ By contrast, all of the other arguments in the *Protagoras* about the way in which virtue is one will turn out to be arguments against (*P*₂)—that is, for (*S*₁)-(*S*₂); that is, (2). (And incidentally, it is an immediate point against the equivalence interpretation of [*S*₁]-[*S*₂] that it must read “different” in [*P*₂] as “non-identical”—see note 18—but cannot read “one and the same” in [*S*₁]-[*S*₂] as “identical.”)

(i) *The argument from opposites* (*Prot.* 332A3-3B6). Here the meaning view and the tendency view make the argument distinctly odd, and perhaps even unintelligible, whereas on the motive-force or state of soul view it makes reasonable sense. Socrates starts from

(11) Wisdom and folly are opposites,
and wants also to get

(12) Temperance and folly are opposites.
For he thinks he can use

(13) To each single thing there is but one opposite
in order to get—since folly is a single thing—

(14) Wisdom = temperance.

Now on the meaning view,²² this argument is scarcely intelligible. For on that view, what is an opposite of what is settled by the meanings of words,²³ so that (14) would be grossly absurd— inferred only by means of a blatant equivocation on “folly” in (11) and (12). Moreover, Socrates’ argument for (12)—from

²¹ At 331A1-B4, (*P*₂) is at issue; and he seems to admit here that the earlier argument “refuted” only (*P*₃): $\sigma\chi\acute{e}dōn\ \tau\ i\ \tau a\bar{n}trōv\ \check{\sigma}\nu$, cp. 331B4-6: $\dot{\eta}\tau\ i\ \tau a\bar{n}trōv\ \dots\ \dot{\eta}\delta\tau\ i\ \delta\muoi\bar{t}atōv\ \dots\ o\bar{lo}\nu\ \dots$.

²² Again in any of the versions I have described above in secs. I and II.

²³ See, e.g., Dodds, *apud Gorgias* 507A7; Rosamund Kent Sprague, *Plato’s Use of Fallacy* (London, 1962), p. 28 n.; Adam, p. 135, seems simply confused.

- (15) For certain values of “*F*”—for example, folly, strength, weakness, speed, slowness—one acts *F*-ly [if and] only if one acts with or by *F*, and one acts oppositely [if and] only if one acts with or by the opposite,

and

- (16) Men who act foolishly act oppositely to men who act temperately

—could only be a begging of the question. How could one establish (16) independently of just those intuitions which are present in (12)?

On the motive-force or state of soul view, however, the argument is perfectly intelligible. What Socrates wants to get to is the idea that in ethics there are *two opposites only*. One is the single thing referred to by both “wisdom” and “temperance” (that is, virtue), and the other the single thing referred to by “intemperance” and “folly” (that is, vice). Under the influence of virtue one will act temperately (and bravely), under the influence of vice one will act foolishly (and impiously). On this view, the argument from (16) to (12) will be an argument from the way men act²⁴ to the motive-forces or states of soul which bring about these actions. And without these restrictions due to considerations of meaning, it *will* make sense to suppose that folly may turn out to be the opposite of temperance, that wisdom may turn out to be identical with

²⁴ Similarly, the much-maligned argument for (16) is about actions primarily. This runs as follows:

- (16a) Men who act not rightly act not temperately (332B1-3).
- (16b) Men who act foolishly act not rightly, and therefore act not temperately (B1-2).
- (16c) Whenever men act, if they do not act temperately, they act intemperately (implied by Burnet’s reading $\eta \tauο\bar{v}α\pi\tauιο\bar{v}$ at 332A8).

The argument from these premises to (16) is a valid argument. There seems no reason not to suppose all three are intended as generalizations from experience. In particular we need not suppose that (16c) involves a confusion of contraries with contradictories. (Before true belief began to figure in Plato’s ethics, knowledge and ignorance, and so virtue and vice, would be without intermediates.) Then all three premises, (16a)-(16c), would be substantial claims about actions leading to the substantial claim (16) about actions.

temperance. So on this view we *do* have an intelligible and non-question-begging argument from (16) to (12).²⁵

(ii) *The argument from confidence* (*Prot.* 349D2-351B2). At first sight, this argument may seem simply an argument about what equivalences (and other universal statements) are true of brave men, wise men, and so forth.²⁶ This view may be especially tempting since Protagoras introduces the argument in terms of his (*P*₃) and (*P*₄). Bravery, he says, is very dissimilar to other virtues, since you will find many unjust, impious (and so forth) men who are nevertheless brave. And the part of Socrates' argument at which he appears to object (350C6-D2) appears to be a universal statement about brave men. But this first sight is misleading. Socrates' method of defense here is attack. He will show this part of the equivalence denied in (*P*₄)—that men are brave only if they are wise—to be true by arguing for the stronger identity “Bravery = wisdom.” To be more precise, he will show that the explanation of a man's brave actions is wisdom: that what it is that makes a man brave is identical with what it is that makes him wise. The relevant part of the argument goes like this:

- (17) Certain men, divers, are confident in diving into wells because they know [what they are doing]; and similarly it is the skilled horsemen who fight confidently on horseback, the skilled peltasts who fight confidently with the light shield.

²⁵ Unfortunately, in the actual argument from (16) to (12), Socrates jumps the gun. For the principle (15) on which he depends does not justify the inference to (12), but only to

(12*) He who acts with or by folly acts with or by the opposite of temperance.

Nevertheless, the error involved is almost certainly not noticed by Socrates, since it is a rather sophisticated one, and one which the wording of (15) and (16) makes it hard to see through. (The gap between [12*] and [12] is clear if we see that moving from [12*] to [12] removes the possibility of inserting an “also” between “folly” and “acts” in [12*]. I am indebted here to my colleague, Louis F. Goble.)

²⁶ So it is taken by Vlastos, *op. cit.*, pp. xxxi-xxxvi; Adam, pp. 172-176; Kent Sprague, p. 96.

And in general,

- (18) Those who know what they are doing are more confident than those who do not;

and

- (19) Those who know are more confident once they have learned [what they are doing] than they were before learning.

The thrust of (17), (18), and (19) is this:

- (20) The most reasonable explanation of the confidence exhibited by men who know what they are doing is just that knowledge: it is knowledge that makes men who know what they are doing confident.

Of course (17), (18), and (19) do not together entail (20). It is rather that Socrates believes that (20) gives the best answer available to the question why (17), (18), and (19) should be true.²⁷ ($\deltaιότη$ and $\deltaιά$ at 350A2, the force of which is captured in [17] by the “because,” give the tip-off here, a tip-off that recent scholars have tended simply to ignore. Our next argument will see

²⁷ In C. S. Peirce’s theory of “abductive inference” or in recent accounts of “theoretical inference,” scientific reasoning is represented neither as deduction nor as induction by simple enumeration. See, e.g., Gilbert H. Harman, “The Inference to the Best Explanation,” *Philosophical Review*, LXXIV (1965), 88-95; Peter Achinstein, “Inference to Scientific Laws,” in *Minnesota Studies in the Philosophy of Science* (Minneapolis, 1971), 5, 87-104.

Vlastos’ introduction to *Plato’s Protagoras* simply assumes that every argument must proceed either by deduction or by induction by simple enumeration. Wherever possible, Socrates’ arguments are fitted into a deductive mold—though always with scrupulous scholarly caveat (e.g., p. xxxii, n. 27 with n. 30). Wherever Socrates uses any empirical argumentation, Vlastos simply rejects it (e.g., p. xxxvii: “Has Socrates then done some empirical research into the psychology of divers, cavalrymen, peltasts . . . ?”). But Vlastos himself (rightly) does not hesitate to judge Socrates empirically wrong (p. xliv). It is noticeable that while all substantial psychological claims receive this treatment, Vlastos has no such objections to Socrates weaving substantial *moral* claims (pp. xlvi-li) into his definitions. (There must be a sharp evaluative-descriptive distinction at work here.) What I would urge is that psychological insights (if such they be) are inherently no more liable to be false than moral insights.

In respect of these assumptions, Vlastos differs from most other recent interpreters of Socrates only in his greater clarity and explicitness.

this διά figuring again, in an undeniably explanatory way, and right where the meaning view would least like to see it.)

On this understanding, the rest of the argument is easily intelligible. What Socrates does is to argue that the ignorant confident are not brave, but rather mad (350B1-C2). So, since it is granted (349E2) that

(21) All the brave are confident,

we have isolated the class of brave men as the class of knowing confident men. Hence our explanation in (20) can now be seen to cover the whole range of brave men. And this is to say that we can identify their bravery, that which makes them brave, as knowledge. Hence since Socrates uses “knowledge” here interchangeably with “wisdom,” we get:

(22) Wisdom = bravery.

(350C4 - 5: *κατὰ τοῦτον τὸν λόγον ἡ σοφία ἀν ἀνδρείᾳ ἔιη*: “according to this argument, wisdom is bravery.”)

As confirmation of this interpretation, we may notice that Protagoras takes the argument to be in effect as we have said. For he remarks that from (21), (18), and (19)—which are just the premises singled out as crucial on our interpretation—Socrates wants to infer (*ἐν τούτῳ οἵει*: 350D4-5) the identity (22): “bravery and wisdom are the same thing” (*τὰντόν*: 350D5, cp. 351A1, 4, and also 350D6, E6). And this natural reading is strengthened when we see knowledge spoken of (351A2, 7) as an explanatory entity (a motive-force or state of soul) in Protagoras’ remarks that

Power comes from either knowledge or from madness and passion,

and

Confidence comes from science (*τέχνη*) or from passion and madness,

whereas

Bravery comes from the natural constitution and good conditioning [the state, not the process] of souls.

These are clearly explanatory remarks, on a par with my (20).

(In fact, Protagoras' reply to Socrates is just this: that although Socrates has explained certain kinds of confidence in men's actions, as he could explain a certain power trained wrestlers have, the best explanation must be a fuller one. Socrates can no more divorce the explanation of the actions of brave men from the natural constitution and good conditioning of their souls than he could divorce the explanation of the strength exhibited by strong men from the natural constitution and good conditioning of their bodies.) "Knowledge," "science," and "wisdom" are clearly being taken by Protagoras at least as singular terms, and in this he is certainly taking himself to be following Socrates. When Socrates tries again a little later to argue the identity of wisdom and bravery, the agreement he slyly gains from Protagoras that knowledge is something "strong," "lordly," "ruling" enough to "master" pleasures, fear, anger, pain, love, and so forth (352B3-D3) is but another instance of this use of singular terms for explanatory entities. (On the equivalence view, what is it that is strong and lordly?) The cumulative evidence for this argument is surely overwhelming: Socrates is operating with, and is understood by Protagoras to be operating with, the motive-force or state of soul view, and attempting to establish identities.

(iii) *An argument concerning "that by virtue of which" (Prot. 360C1-7).* The preceding two arguments, in showing the superiority of the motive-force or state of soul view to the meaning view, have read the "with or by"²⁸ locution of "Men act bravely with or by bravery" as causal or explanatory rather than as epistemological or semantic. In the principle (15), "acting *F*-ly or by *F*" means *not* that it is by seeing that the meaning of "*F*" is instantiated in an act that one sees that the act is done *F*-ly, but rather that it is the quality *F* which makes men act *F*-ly. The present argument will confirm that reading. Simultaneously, it will confirm my view of the "What is *X*?" question—that that question is not a request for the meaning of a word or a request for an essence or a universal (on what I have called the usual view of essences and universals) as in (6), but rather a request for a psychological account (explan-

²⁸ See n. 5 above. The dative case is what is in question at 332B1-7, at B8, δπό at C1-E2.

tion) of what it is in men's psyches that makes them brave. For the "What is *X*?" question is often put as "What is that single thing by virtue of which (with or by which) the many *F* things are *F*?"; and I will be arguing that that too is a causal or explanatory question rather than an epistemological or semantical one.

That Socrates at least sometimes so intends such locutions as "with or by" or "that by virtue of which" is absolutely clear, I think, from the tail end of the *ἀκρασία* argument in the *Protagoras* (360C1-7). The argument begins with just such a premise as the one with which we have been concerned:

(23) The cowardly are cowardly because of cowardice.

We do not have to wait long to see that the "because of" here is non-trivial. For Socrates appeals to the empirical-psychological argument²⁹ earlier (that no one acts contrary to what he knows to be the best alternative open to him) to say that men are cowardly because of their ignorance of what is fearful and what is not fearful, so that

(24) The cowardly are cowardly because of ignorance.

But therefore,

(25) Cowardice = ignorance.

Obviously the argument is that "cowardice" and "ignorance" must name the same motive-force or state of soul since either name goes into

(26) The cowardly are cowardly because of . . .³⁰

So the "because of" here is clearly non-trivial; it is part of some substantial psychological theorizing.

From (25), Socrates goes on to identify the opposite of ignorance, namely wisdom, with the opposite of cowardice, namely bravery. And evidently to say this is to say that there is just one set of opposites involved, each opposite admitting a number of names. Socrates continues, "Now, Protagoras, do you still believe that

²⁹ See Vlastos, pp. xxxvii-xliii, esp. p. xxix.

³⁰ For (25), cf. Adam, p. 190. That (26) captures Socrates' intentions is clear from a more literal rendering of the Greek formulated by (23): "This [thing] because of which . . . is . . ." (360C1, cf. C5).

there are men who are most ignorant, yet most brave?" What this remark shows is that, as before (see the beginning of argument [ii]), Socrates' strategy is to refute Protagoras' (*P*₃) and (*P*₄) by establishing the identity (*S*₁)-(*S*₂). A few lines later (361B1-2), confirmation of this appears when Socrates speaks of his thesis as that "all these things are knowledge—justice, temperance and bravery." That this does indeed express an identity will be even clearer from the next argument.

(iv) *The argument from "Virtue is knowledge"* (*Prot.* 360E6-361D6). This argument continues from the preceding one, and focuses on the way in which the conclusion of the *Protagoras* treats ἀρετή ("virtue") as a singular term. For consider the treatment of "Virtue is (is not) knowledge" as it occurs between Socrates and Protagoras at 361B1-6. Protagoras' position has a form most naturally characterized as the denial of an identity,

Virtue is something other than (*ἄλλο τι η̄*) knowledge,
so Socrates' position,

All [these] things [justice, temperance, bravery] are knowledge, and Virtue is entirely [or: as a single whole] knowledge, would naturally be characterized as an identity. It is perfectly possible from a linguistic point of view to treat Protagoras' position as the denial not of an identity but of a universal predication:

The virtues are not cases [or types] of knowledge
(cf. the not quite parallel 330B4). But this does not fit so very well with the consistently singular use of the terms for virtue and knowledge in the context. For apart from their appearances in the singular here, it is also the case that the pair

Virtue is knowledge

Virtue is teachable

in 361A6-B6 are treated as instances of answers to the characteristic pair of questions

What is *X* (virtue itself)?

Is *X Y* (is virtue teachable)?

But in the first question (*τί ποτ’ ἔστων αὐτό³¹ ή ἀρετή*: 360E8) as in the second (*πῶς ποτ’ ἔχει τὰ περὶ τῆς ἀρστῆς*), the words for virtue or “virtue itself” are singular terms. So too 361C5-6: *ἐπὶ τὴν ἀρετὴν ὅτι ἔστω, καὶ πάλιν . . . περὶ αὐτοῦ εἴτε διδακτὸν εἴτε μὴ διδακτόν*. It is one and the same entity which is *both* referred to as “virtue itself” and about which one asks “Whatever is it (*τί ποτ’ ἔστιν*)?” and about which Socrates asks whether or not it is teachable. But it is common ground to the meaning view and to the motive-force or state of soul view that the “*X*” in “What is *X*?” does duty for a singular term (see the discussion of [5]-[7] at the beginning of Section I). Therefore, in all of the following sentences, “Virtue” and (therefore) “knowledge” should be read as singular terms (and also, in consequence, as having the same reference):

Virtue is knowledge,

Virtue is teachable,³²

Justice, temperance, bravery are all knowledge.

But this means that we can affirm (from the first and third of these) that, for Socrates,

(10) Virtue = knowledge,

(2) Bravery = wisdom = temperance = justice = piety,
and also³³

³¹ For the unusual neuter, Adam refers us to *Crat.* 411D, *Thet.* 146E. Thus Burnet’s comma after *αὐτό* is unnecessary.

³² Socrates of course claims here that Virtue is *not* teachable, which he notes as paradoxical given his belief that virtue is knowledge. The key to this apparent paradox is, I think, that

(i) There are no teachers of virtue (*Prot.* 319-320; cf. *Meno* 89-96) and

(ii) Socrates, being ignorant, is yet the wisest man in Greece (*Apol.* 21A ff.). In short, it is a paradox only on the assumption that someone has knowledge (of the relevant kind) and someone has virtue. In the *Meno*, where the identity of virtue with knowledge is given up, the latter half of this judgment is softened, and some are allowed to have virtue by a divine dispensation as mysterious as the rhapsode’s ability to speak about Homer (*Meno* 96E ff., cf. *Ion* 533C ff.). R. S. Bluck, *Plato’s Meno* (Cambridge, 1961), pp. 23-25 with 3, seems to stop just short of this suggested resolution of the paradox.

³³ As is obvious from the fact once “bravery,” “wisdom,” etc. all name one and the same entity, so will “virtue” simply be a name of that entity.

(2*) Bravery = wisdom = temperance = justice = piety = virtue = knowledge.

Thus once more we get identities for “Virtue is knowledge” and “Virtue is one.”

We can also now see that “Virtue is knowledge” is the Socratic answer to the question “What is virtue?” (though “knowledge” must doubtless still be expanded somewhat). Yet we have just seen in the preceding argument that Socrates holds “Virtue is knowledge” on the basis of substantial psychological beliefs. So in the *Protagoras* at least, the question “What is virtue?” is a request for a psychological account of virtue (and not a purely semantical or purely epistemological one). On the meaning view, “Virtue is knowledge”—that is, (10)—would have to be analytic, a matter of the meaning of “virtue”—implausible in itself—whereas the unity of virtue doctrine—that is, (2*)—is always taken to be synthetic. But is it really plausible that (10) should be analytic, (2*) synthetic?

I conclude that the motive-force or state of soul view makes better sense of all four of these arguments in the *Protagoras* than the meaning view. In the next section, we will come to the same conclusion about the lead argument in each of the *Laches* and the *Charmides*.

IV

I now respond to the challenge to say more about this single entity which makes men brave, wise, temperate, just, pious, virtuous, knowledgeable. It is the knowledge of good and evil. This becomes obvious, I think, from the chief argument of the *Laches* (197E10-199E12). Nicias’ proposed account of bravery (194E11-195A1) is:

(27) Bravery is the science (*ἐπιστήμη*: knowledge) of things terrible and confidence-inspiring.

From this account and Socrates’ own (198B4-C5) explanation of the terrible as what causes fear, fear being the expectation of future evils (and *mutatis mutandis* for the confidence-inspiring), Socrates deduces that

(28) Bravery is the science of future goods and evils.

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But he says—and those who have followed me thus far will note this statement about an identity and the use to which it is put in deducing the conclusion—that

- (29) The same science is of the same things whether past, present, or future.

Therefore,

- (30) Bravery is the science of all goods and evils.

This gives Nicias only two choices, Socrates says (199C3-D2). *Either* (27) expresses only one-third of the account of bravery, and so is not the correct account of bravery, or

- (30*) Bravery is the whole of virtue.

Would Nicias like to switch his view and assert (30*)? But no, Nicias would not. For Nicias believes that

- (31) Bravery is a (proper) part of virtue.

This latter belief is the first premise Socrates elicits from Nicias in this argument (198A1-9), and the premise in which he rubs Nicias' nose at the end of the argument (199E3-12). It seems clear that Socrates is telling us we must either give up (27) or give up (31). But there is the strongest possible evidence in the text of the *Laches* (what need to mention *Protagoras* 360C2-D5?) that Socrates endorsed (27) as a true account of bravery.³⁴ Surely, then, Socrates is telling us to reject (31). Bravery is the whole of virtue—that is,

³⁴ The argument for (27) is that given

(27A) Each person is good with respect to those things with respect to which he is wise

and

(27B) The brave man is good

we can infer

(27C) Bravery is a certain kind of wisdom (knowledge, science)

But (27A) and (27B) are Socratic (194D1-3; and 192C5-D8, 193D4, cf., e.g., *Charm.* 159D8; *Gorg.* 466B6, 470C2-3, 476B1-2) and so is the inference from these to (27C) (194D6-9, E8). So unless we suppose that Socrates rejected the specification, at 194E11, from (27C) to (27), we must surely suppose that (27) is also Socratic.

(32) Bravery = virtue = the science of goods and evils,
which readily goes together with our identity (2) to yield the
desired result.

(Just to reinforce the present conclusion, and to further confirm the interpretation of the unity of virtue doctrine offered in this paper, let us notice that on the meaning view, Socrates has reduced Nicias' "definition" to absurdity. But since, as we have seen [above, note 34], [27] and [28] are unobjectionably Socratic, the meaning view must say that—in adducing [29] as relevant to the meaning of "bravery" [the essence of bravery, and so forth] which is being given in [28]—Socrates is tripping Nicias up with a crude [and absurdly irrelevant] fallacy, and that he was quite wrong to think the choice in the argument was between [27] and [31]. On this view, Nicias should have replied with:

[29*] Bravery is the science of all goods *qua* science of future
goods,

and Socrates' silly little argument would have fallen apart.³⁵ But why suppose that Socrates is committing a crude fallacy when he can simply be uttering what stands a fair chance of being true—namely, that

[33] That which makes us good at dealing with future goods
= that which makes us good at dealing with all goods
[as good civil engineers know both about past bridges
and future bridges],

³⁵ I have already given an argument against the meaning view in the *Laches* at n. 8 above. (The meaning view is employed with considerable skill in Gerasimos Santas, "Socrates at work on virtue and knowledge in Plato's *Laches*," in Gregory Vlastos [ed.] *Socrates* [New York, 1971]—reprinted from the *Review of Metaphysics*, 1969. See esp. p. 184, n. 5 ["What is bravery?," not the general's question], 187 [bravery as a "concept"], 199-200, 208 [factual vs. conceptual]. On p. 204, Santas makes as his main objection to Socrates' argument something analogous to our [29*]. On p. 202, we see that Santas' views lead him to some unusual chronological machinery: the *Euthyphro* earlier than both *Laches* and *Protagoras*, the *Laches* leading to the *Protagoras*, and then in the *Republic* a reversion to the *Euthyphro*'s denial of the unity of virtue! Nevertheless, I did find some judgments confirming my views—on pp. 187, 206 [Socrates seeks the quality brave *men* have rather than the quality brave *acts* have: see n. 17 above], 195, n. 10 [Nicias' account of bravery is Socratic] and 202-203 [Socrates gives up (31) rather than (27)]. It is hardly surprising that Santas finds Socrates rather confused in his alleged attempts to give the meaning of "bravery".)

and making a quite unobjectionable substitution of expressions for identicals in the context “Bravery is . . .”?)

The *Charmides* will yield a similar conclusion. The chief argument here (169D2-175B2) shows difficulties in Critias' account of temperance as the knowledge (science) of what one knows and does not know (169D6-7, 170A3-4).³⁶ The first difficulty (169D9-171C9) is that it is not clear how the temperate man could know that another person has the science of medicine without himself having that science. And if temperance is not the knowledge *of* what one knows and does not know, but simply the knowledge *that* one knows or does not know (any particular thing) (170D1-3), by what conceivable means could the man who possesses this knowledge *test* anyone's knowledge or ignorance?³⁷ But this difficulty is simply waived for the crucial second difficulty: even granting that there is such a thing as this knowledge (science) *of* what one knows and does not know (along with the knowledge *that* one knows or does not know whatever it is), would it in fact be of benefit to us (172C6-D10)? Would it in fact turn out to be a flawless guide to life, both for us and those we rule over (171D6-8, 172A5 with 161E10-162A5); would the Utopia of my dream (says Socrates: 173A7-D5) come about with the human race all living knowledgeably and happily under the rule of this science? Well, if all this *were* to come about, which of the many sciences would be the one that would make us happy (173D8-174A11)? Arithmetic? Medicine? No, the science of good and evil (174B11-D7)—*that* is what we must have if the other sciences are to benefit us. So, Socrates says to Critias (174A10-11, D3-4),

³⁶ This account is introduced as “temperance is knowing *oneself*” (164D4, 165B4, 169D7). It then becomes the science of *itself* and all other sciences (166C2-3, E5-8, 167A6-7, C1-2, 169B1 and D4 with B6-7), which is explicated as in the body of the paper. At 169D7, the knowledge of what one knows and does not know is given as the account of temperance *or* (= i.e.) knowing oneself. At 169D9-E8, Socrates gives an argument for saying that one who has the knowledge which is knowledge of *itself* will know *himself*, an argument which has often been viewed with suspicion (see, e.g., T. G. Tuckey, *Plato's Charmides* [Cambridge, 1951], pp. 33 ff.).

³⁷ This passage shows clearly the high standards for knowledge which lay behind Socratic ignorance—a subject very much in Socrates' mind in the examination of temperance as self-knowledge (see 165B5-C2 and esp. 166C7-D2). Cf. n. 32 above.

- (34) Your temperance, the science of all sciences and ignorances is *not* the science which makes us happy, whose work is to benefit us.

So, since medicine and all the other (departmental) sciences do everything else for us, your temperance is useless. So our inquiry into temperance, the finest of all things, has not gotten us anywhere (175A9 ff.).

It should now be clear what Socrates is doing in considering this second difficulty. He is not simply giving a further refutation of an account of temperance already shot down by the first difficulty. And he is not just aimlessly dragging in references to a science which makes us happy, a science without which medicine and the other sciences will not benefit us. All of this comes out not just in the enthusiasm with which Socrates dwells upon the benefits which temperance should bring us, but also in the reason why (34) is false. The reason why (34) is false is that it is *another* science which makes us happy, whose work it is to benefit us—the science of good and evil. This, surely, is that “finest thing of all” (175A11), that temperance which leads a city to be well run (161E10-162A8, referred back to at 175A3-5). Socrates is telling us that

- (35) Temperance = the science of good and evil
 = the science which makes all other sciences beneficial
 = the science of making oneself and others happy
 = the science of ruling a city or household.³⁸

³⁸ It is clear that all that stops Tuckey (pp. 80 ff.) from asserting this conclusion (he accepts that [30] above is Socrates’ “definition” of bravery in the *Laches*) is Tuckey’s own belief that “the knowledge of good and evil” is *also* the “definition” of virtue, whereas temperance is merely “a particular manifestation” of virtue (p. 88). Tuckey is evidently lapsing here into what I call the tendency view. It cannot be said that the resulting account is consistent.

Further confirmation of the motive-force or state of soul view in the *Char-mides* comes from the causal account which must be given of the question “What is temperance?” there. Thus at 158E7-159A3, temperance is a state of soul entering into the causal explanation of how some people know what temperance is. Where Critias and Charmides try to say what temperance is in terms of actions, Socrates redirects them to causal states (e.g., 160D5-8, E3-5) or states of soul (164A1-3, 165B4).

Putting together our results from the *Laches* and the *Charmides*, we have again the unity of virtue, as well as a further characterization of the single entity referred to in that doctrine. Moreover, the *Laches* makes it a little clearer why the science of good and evil (goods and evils) = the science which makes all others beneficial (195C7-D9). It is because the doctor's knowledge about a sick man is confined to what makes him sick or healthy, what will cure him, and so forth. He has no special knowledge, however, on the question whether in the sick man's circumstances it would be better or worse for him to be cured.³⁹ This knowledge belongs to the science of good and evil. (It is evident from the *Charmides* passages we have been considering that this knowledge is, in germ, the political art of the *Euthydemus* and *Republic*.⁴⁰ This science has a long and interesting development in Plato's thought; but I do not attempt to trace that development in this paper.)

A further argument that the single entity in question is the science of good and evil can be gained from the *akrasia* argument of the *Protagoras* (351B3-357E8). The whole of that famous argument is there simply to provide a premise needed for argument (iii) (360C1-7, cf. C7-D5) discussed in Section III above—namely,

(24) The cowardly are cowardly because of ignorance.

(Recall that the whole section from 349D2-360E5 is concerned with Socrates trying to prove that bravery = wisdom, against Protagoras' claim that some men may be brave without being wise: see esp. 349D2-8, 359A7-B6). But now what is this ignorance? A glance at 360B6-7 with 359D4-6 and at 358E2 with

³⁹ Notice how, in this evidently Socratic answer which Nicias gives, he uses "terrible or not" (195C9, D8, E5 and esp. 195D4) interchangeably with "better or not" (195C9-D1, D4, 196A2), in line with Socrates' account at 198B4-C5.

⁴⁰ Cf. also *Lysis* 207D-210D, *Prot.* 318A-319B, *Gorg.* 464B, 501A-C with 503A, 510A ff. I do not want to suggest that Socrates had more positive beliefs about this science than he actually did. E.g., he may have felt genuine logical difficulties over it in a few places—e.g., *Euthyd.* 291B4-293A6 with *Lysis* 219C7-221A5. But he certainly seems to have thought there was such a science (even if no one at present possessed it: n. 32 above), and that he could say *some* things about it and the benefits it would yield.

358C1-5, 357D3-E2 will show that this ignorance is the lack of the measuring art, the science which measures the relative magnitudes of present and future goods and evils, not being deceived by the effects of time perspective (356C5 ff.), the science which the rational part of the soul will have in *Republic* X (602CD). It is, in short, the science of good and evil.⁴¹ And so, the wisdom about what is terrible and what is not, which bravery is identified with at 360D4-5 as a result of the premise just cited, is (what we should in any case have expected from the *Laches*) the science of good and evil. (And notice that the wisdom about what is terrible and what is not must be identical with wisdom *simpliciter* if Socrates is not to be giving a quite irrelevant argument against Protagoras' claim that there are men who are brave *but not wise*.) Once again bravery = wisdom = the science of good and evil.

CONCLUSION

The position I am arguing for, and the position I am arguing against, may be conveniently summarized as follows. On the usual views, there are two kinds of unity which virtue has. One is the identity of an *εἶδος* or Form (in some suitably nonmetaphysical sense of "Form," to keep Socrates' views distinct from those of Plato's) in the many instances and even in the different species of virtue, and one is the identity of the *extensions* of the different species of virtue, together with the non-identity of the species themselves. On my view there is just one kind of unity involved: it is one and the same (explanatory) entity being talked about in each of

Virtue = bravery = wisdom = knowledge = temperance
= and so forth.

and

Bravery is found in all brave men acting bravely.

⁴¹ I am ignoring here the complications arising from the fact that Socrates uses "good" interchangeably with "pleasant in the long run."

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On the usual views, the latter proposition must be analytic, the former synthetic. On my view, neither proposition is analytic; each is a substantial truth of psychology. Indeed, for my part, I doubt that there is a philosophically useful analytic-synthetic distinction to be made.⁴² So I am happy not to find myself asking at what point Socrates seeks the analytic truths that answer his “What is *X*?” questions. I also doubt that there are any good grounds for finding the distinction in the Socratic dialogues,⁴³ though this is not the place to argue the point in detail. The present article offers some support for this view, however, by showing that one can do without the distinction in at least some areas of Socratic thought.⁴⁴

In specifying the single entity to which the virtue-words refer, I have said of it little more than that it is an explanatory entity and that it is identifiable as the knowledge (science) of good and evil. In particular, I have left open the question whether this knowledge (science) is more appropriately described as a “motive-force” or a “state of soul.” Indeed, it may seem strange to think that knowledge, by itself, could be a motive-force in any way. To show that this is a possibility would send us on a long detour through the treatment of reason and knowledge in Socrates and Plato. I believe, in fact, that the Socratic concepts do not stand in any simple relation to ours. But showing this will require further

⁴² The most that I think can be done for the supposed distinction is done in Hilary Putnam, “The Analytic and the Synthetic,” *Minnesota Studies in the Philosophy of Science* (Minneapolis, 1962), III, 358–397. What is done there is not enough to make the distinction of any interest to interpreters of Socrates.

Vlastos and Santas provide classic examples of exploitation of the analytic-synthetic distinction (see above nn. 7, 27, 35).

⁴³ Socrates does indeed distinguish universal truths from particular truths. But where does he distinguish *among* universal truths those which are synthetic or empirical, and those which are analytic or conceptual, even in practice, let alone in theory? (Empirical knowledge is not explicitly short-changed by Plato earlier than the *Phaedo*; and those who say that empirical knowledge is *implicitly* short-changed in the recollection theory of the *Meno* will usually be just those who take the recollection theory there to be already Platonic, and no longer Socratic.)

⁴⁴ I do without the distinction in another area in my paper, “Socrates on Virtue and Motivation” (forthcoming).

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studies.⁴⁵ Fortunately, the results of the present paper are relatively independent of those studies.⁴⁶

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⁴⁵ See the paper mentioned in n. 44. I have also investigated the question in a hitherto unpublished paper on the transition from the Socratic to the Platonic treatment of *akrasia*.

⁴⁶ My research was supported by grants from Princeton University and the University of Wisconsin, for which I am most grateful. Versions of the paper were read at the University of Wisconsin, the University of Toronto and the University of British Columbia, and comments from my audiences there have been very helpful in reformulating various parts of the paper. I was also forced to a number of useful reformulations by comments from an anonymous referee and from the editors of the *Philosophical Review*. I am also indebted to Dennis Stampe and Richard Kraut, who gave me the benefit of their comments on earlier drafts. And my debt to Gregory Vlastos in Socratic studies generally, especially from numerous conversations, has been enormous, and I gratefully acknowledge it here.